



November 1, 2005

The Honorable Mitch Daniels
Governor of the State of Indiana
State House
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Governor Daniels:

In accordance with IC 20-10.1-25.1, this letter provides you with an annual update of progress on the Buddy System Project administered by the Corporation for Educational Technology (CET).

The attached report portrays another exceptional year for the project now in our 18th year of existence. As the nation's first and foremost endeavor to extend learning beyond the classroom, Buddy has provided home computer access and extended learning opportunities to over 35,000 Hoosier youngsters, some of whom have taken their place in the workforce and others who are now pursuing studies for promising careers.

Despite our rich history, the CET Board of Directors in 2000-01 made sweeping changes to the project to focus more on facilitating student academic achievement and growing our professional development capacity. All of our new activities align with PL 221 and the *No Child Left Behind* legislation to better serve the needs of education in our state. To signal the differences between the old Buddy program and the new one, the Board renamed the project as Buddy², the Next Generation of Teaching & Learning.

While Buddy² now operates several different projects, including the BTLC training center to effect knowledge transfer, the flagship project of Buddy² is its *STAR Writers* program.

The attached reports summarize the important accomplishments in student writing growth that schools participating in the *STAR Writers* project have gained during the past year's implementation. Most importantly, we are now beginning to exercise strategies to use the findings from the *STAR Writers* project for the benefit of all Indiana teachers. We have just opened a new website, <http://thewritingsite.org> to provide interactive tutorials for holistic assessment of student writing for use by teachers in grades 3-8 in a variety of genres using ISTEP+ rubrics. We are currently expanding that to include grades K-12. Additionally, we have begun a partnership with the Purdue University School of Education to begin

addressing one of our more critical findings – that a majority of Indiana educators have little knowledge of how to teach or assess student writing.

We have several improvements currently underway for the fifth year of the program and look forward to continued growth in project effectiveness. Though budget cuts have necessarily limited the scope of our operations, we are excited by our results and foresee further improvements in student achievement for the coming year.

We again thank you for the generous support your Office has always given the project and we look forward to serving the state with the exciting new mission we have undertaken. If there are questions on the report or about the project, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Marvin E. Bailey, President

Cc: The Honorable Robert Garton
The Honorable Brian Bosma
Dr. Suellen Reed
CET Board of Directors

Buddy² Mission Statement

Buddy² develops and facilitates leading edge learning projects in K-12 school communities to increase student achievement using technology in anytime, anywhere settings. Buddy² initiatives aim to share best practices among educators, strengthen family involvement in education, and extend learning beyond the bounds of school time and place. Buddy² values and supports equal access to learning technologies regardless of socioeconomic realities.

The *Buddy System Project* began in 1988 by providing home technology to 250 families in five school communities through a partnership of public and private institutions. The traditional *Buddy* (computer-at-home) project has served over 35,000 Hoosier families since the project's inception.

Buddy has provided programming, special project facilitation and training services to more than 12,000 educators from all 92 Indiana counties through its grants, professional development center, outreach training programs and conferences. Our award-winning website provides free teaching and learning resources to teachers, parents and students at <http://www.buddyproject.org>.

In 2000, *Buddy* renewed its mission to focus on research & development programs that drive student academic achievement gains, renaming the project, "Buddy²: the Next Generation." *Buddy* still honors and recognizes schools and teachers who strive to implement teaching and learning programs that show visible evidence of our Buddy core values.

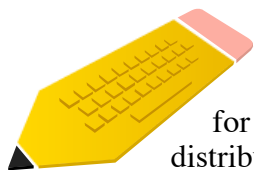
- Learning opportunities beyond classroom time and place;
- Technology as a tool to support learning goal achievement;
- Parent involvement in the education of their children;
- Equal access to technology resources for all students and teachers; and
- Reflective practice of teaching and learning for continuous improvement.

STAR Writers: Over the past five years, our attention has been focused, predominantly, on improving writing instruction and assessment. After coordinating a three-year research and development project called STAR Writers in five elementary schools (2001-2004) we learned that student achievement in writing is attained by increasing attention to instruction and practice of writing skills. We are now engaged in year two of a follow-up study among four schools (2004-2006) to hone writing assessment skills of teachers. Confidence of participating teachers in grades 2 through 8 in holistic assessment using the ISTEP+ rubrics has dramatically improved and inter-rater reliability between teachers and trained STAR scorers now exceeds 95%. Teacher participants employ writing traits assessment and instructional strategies in their day-to-day teaching. Their "best practice" lesson plans will soon be shared with all Indiana educators through *Buddy's* new online writing resource.



The Writing Site: In an effort to extend the benefits of *Buddy's* experiences in writing instruction and assessment to all Indiana educators, we launched a new *Writing Site* (<http://thewritingsite.org>) early in 2005. At the core of this site is an interactive tutorial for holistic assessment of student writing using the ISTEP+ rubrics. Currently, users can practice scoring authentic student writing samples in a variety of genres from grades 3 through 8. Immediately after submitting a score, the user is presented with a comparison of his/her score with an "expert's" score, including a detailed rationale explaining the scorer's thinking process while assigning the derived score. Six practice papers are available in each grade level and genre. In addition, hundreds of writing exemplars are available for review, download, and printing for classroom instruction use. Supplementary content about writing instruction, strategies, resources and research is being developed to add value to this site as the "go to" for educators looking for information about writing.

In the fall of 2005 we launched Phase II of the site's development to expand the assessment tutorials to grades K through 12 as well as to provide additional exemplars for writing across all content areas. To date, more than 150 Indiana classroom teachers have pledged to share classroom sets of writing samples this year to fuel this development.



Write Connections: 2005 is the inaugural year for this new quarterly newsletter publication made freely available to Indiana educators. As implied the focus is on writing and the newsletter will be issued in three editions: One for primary teachers, one for upper elementary teachers, and one for secondary teachers. The newsletters will be distributed via email listserv with content also linked and archived at the *Writing Site*.

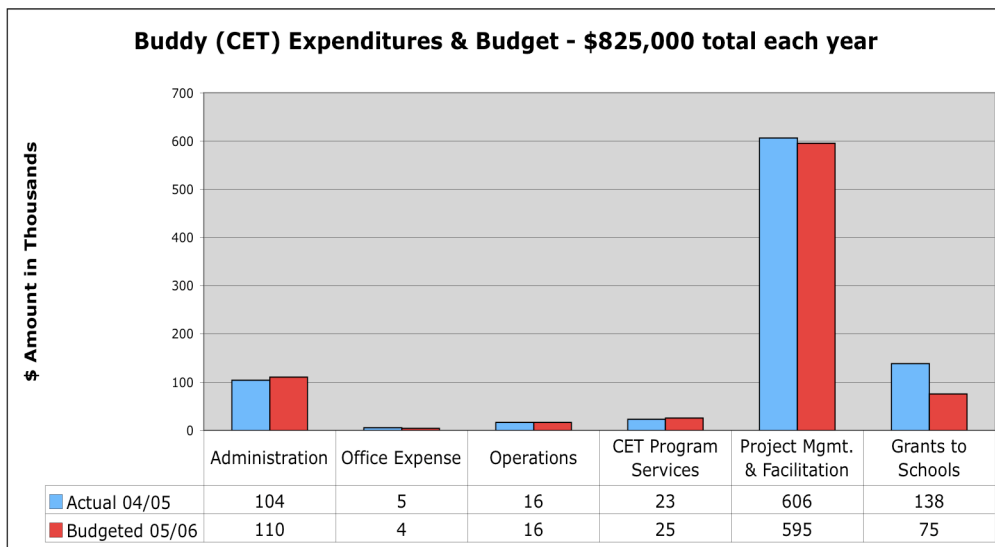
University Collaboration: A key finding from *Buddy STAR Writers* research is that the majority of Indiana educators, even among those newly entering the profession, has little or no knowledge of how to teach or assess writing. In the summer of 2005, *Buddy* engaged in collaborative discussion with members of Purdue University's College of Education to begin dialogue that will, hopefully, lead to improvement of pre-service as well as in-service training. One of the group's first planned activities is to convene a "summit" event involving representatives of all Indiana-based writing initiatives, K-12 schools and institutions of higher learning to share knowledge and experiences as well as discuss the issues of literacy instruction. A steering committee, representing multiple universities, the Indiana Department of Education, K-12 institutions and consultants with expertise in the field met in mid-October to begin planning the event that is tentatively scheduled for August 2006.



Buddy Teaching and Learning Center (BTLC): *Buddy* has maintained a training center since 1995. The current *Buddy Teaching and Learning Center* is co-located with Central Indiana Education Service Center at 6321 La Pas Trail in Indianapolis. (<http://www.btlc.org>) The BTLC serves several important functions:

- Host venue for extremely low-cost, but high quality, professional development for hundreds of teachers each year at the center on standards-based instructional strategies integrated with technology tools as well as coordinates BTLC Outreach training provided to schools at their own sites – Served approximately 800 teachers in BTLC and Outreach sessions during 2004-2005.
- Host venue for other organizations' training programs (IN Dept. of Ed., MSD Pike, CIESC, etc.)
- Coordinates regional training for use of the *Writing Site* – 350 participants trained in 04/05.
- Work center for *Buddy* facilitators to meet, develop and prepare support materials for *STAR Writers*, *The Writing Site*, *Write Connections* and all BTLC offerings.

My Target 2: Though the Lilly Endowment grant that funded development of My Target 2 is now depleted, CET continues to support maintenance and promotion of *MyTARGET 2*, an online tool for educators to gauge and support their training needs for using and integrating educational technologies.



Buddy Funding: The Corporation for Educational Technology budget, as approved by the Indiana General Assembly, was \$825,000 for each of the past three years due to the ongoing budget crisis. This level of funding severely hampers our ability to award significant grants to schools for implementation of R&D projects, but continues to allow us to make modest progress in the development of educational technology resources for use by all educators.

As always, we very much appreciate the continued support and partnership of the Indiana General Assembly and the Indiana Department of Education that, together, make our work feasible, productive, and cost-effective toward ultimate benefits for all students and citizenry of Indiana.

STAR Writers 2 Project Update

Participating schools: In Year 2 of 2-year project (2004-2006)

Shawswick Elementary (Bedford) — 8 teachers, 220 students, grades 2 through 5

Shawswick Middle School (Bedford) — 3 teachers, 250 students, grades 6 through 8

Mount Healthy Elementary (Columbus) — 11 teachers, 240 students, grades 3 through 6

Longfellow Elementary (Muncie) — 7 teachers, 150 students, grades 3 through 5

Goals:

Increase teacher confidence & competence in writing instruction and assessment

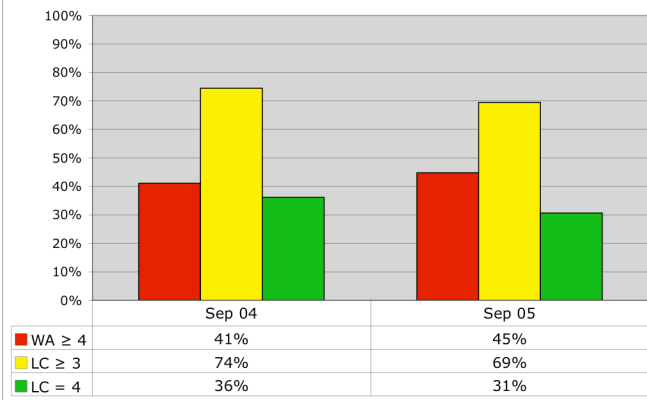
Improve students' writing skills

Build student ownership of learning goals

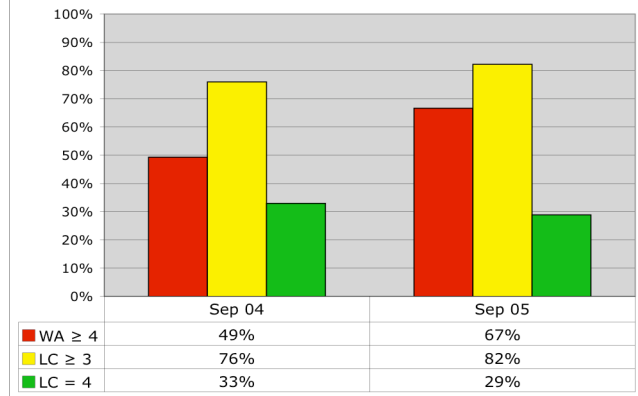
Increase family involvement in their children's education

Building on the foundation of progress and learning from the original STAR Writers R&D project in 2001-2004, STAR Writers 2 hopes to test the sustainability of processes and behaviors implanted in two continuing schools, while testing the impact of some project interventions in two additional schools. Three writing samples were taken and scored during 2004-2005. In September 2005 we assigned a descriptive writing prompt against which to compare results from the descriptive writing sample taken one year ago in September 2004. In the charts below we compare the percentage of students scoring 4 or higher on the 6 pt. ISTEP+ Writing Applications rubric last year to this year. We also looked at the percentage of students scoring 3 or higher on the 4-pt. Language Conventions rubric and finally, the percentage of students who scored 4 of 4 points on the Language Conventions rubric. Overall results for each school are mixed, but generally good improvement in all areas. At one school, where one grade level has "opted out" of project participation shows sharp declines in student performance at that grade level, bringing down the school's overall mastery level. The breakdown among grade levels for that school is shown on the following page.

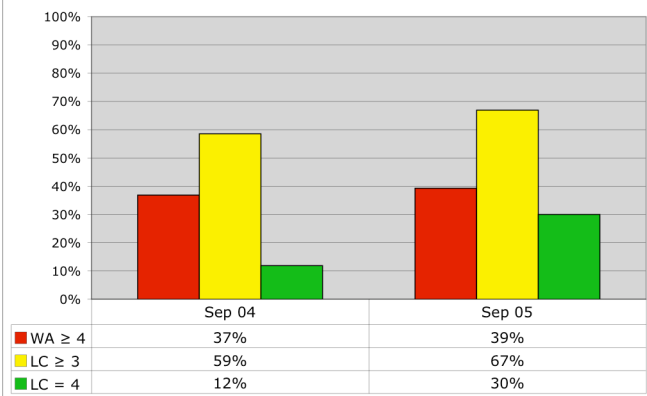
Shawswick Elementary School — Grades 3-5
Percentage of sample papers demonstrating "mastery" of Writing Applications and Language Conventions



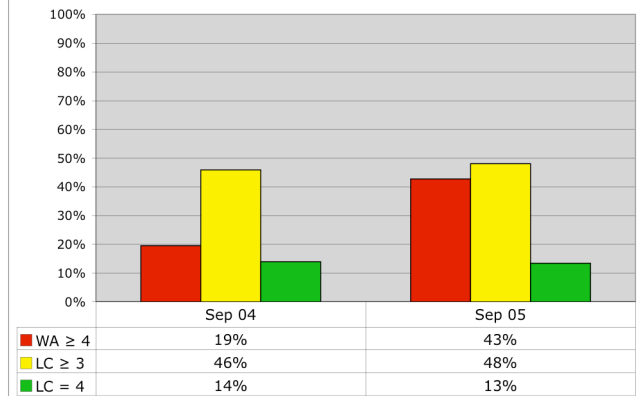
Shawswick Middle School — Grades 6-8
Percentage of sample papers demonstrating "mastery" of Writing Applications and Language Conventions



Mt. Healthy Elementary School — Gr. 4-6
Percentage of sample papers demonstrating "mastery" of Writing Applications and Language Conventions

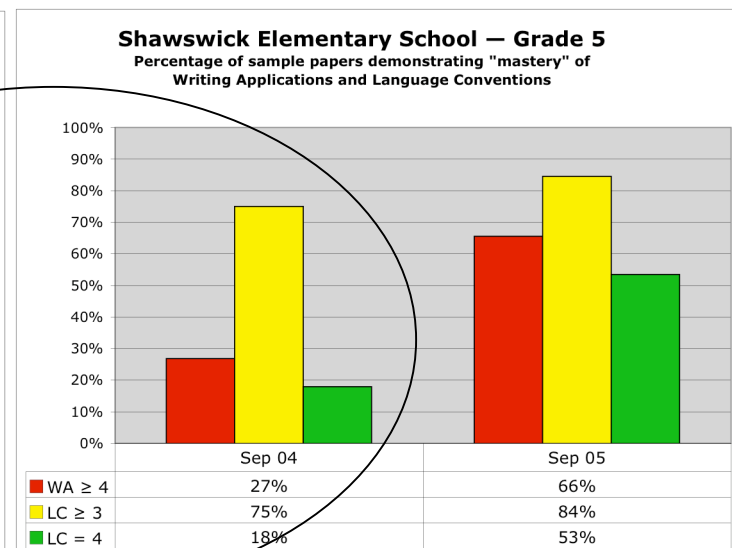
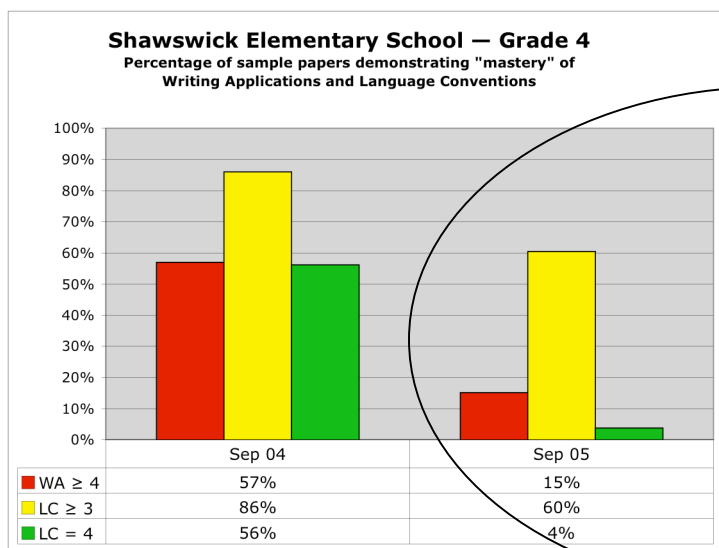
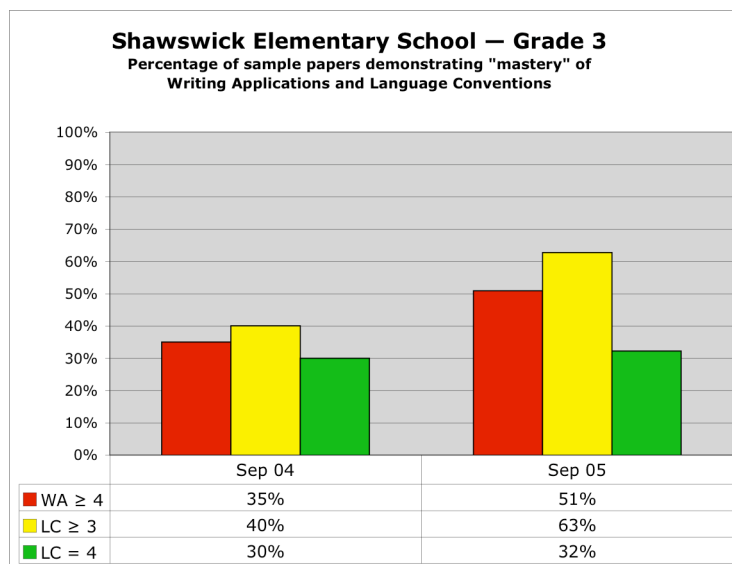


Longfellow Elementary School — Grades 4-5
Percentage of sample papers demonstrating "mastery" of Writing Applications and Language Conventions



Shawswick Elementary School Results

A small cloud of disappointment that appeared when two fourth grade teachers elected not to engage in the STAR project's instructional interventions has shown a silver lining in terms of informative data. The teachers agreed, however, to issue the writing tests at the same times as other classrooms, making their classrooms a sort of "control group" to compare to other class performances. You can see in the charts below that each time the sample was taken in the fourth grade, the resulting scores for the group were significantly lower in Writing Applications than their participating colleagues' classes. We believe this supports the theory that "what is focused upon in instruction, shows gains during assessment," ergo what is not focused upon, yields the opposite result.



Also, at Shawswick, one of three second grade teachers elected to participate in STAR Writers 2 both last year and this year. We tracked the students from her class and disaggregated their scores from the total group to compare against the scores of students who did not participate in STAR during grade 2. The chart below shows the percentage of students who received a 4 or higher in Writing Applications and a 3 or higher in Language Conventions on the Fall 2005 writing sample. Students engaged in the STAR Writers project during second grade outperformed their peers in non-participating classes by 23 percentage points in Writing Applications. The difference between groups in their Language Conventions performance, however, was negligible.

Report prepared by Nancy Miller, Buddy Project Manager, October 2005.

